

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for a proponent to enable the secure approval of an electronic document by a correspondent over a network, said method comprising the steps of:

a) providing a server application on a proponent server connected to the network, said server application comprising approval tools for the secure approval of the electronic document;

b) providing a correspondent application on a correspondent terminal connected to the network, said correspondent application allowing the correspondent to remotely and securely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the correspondent terminal;

c) making the electronic document available on the correspondent terminal; and

d) approving the electronic document on the correspondent terminal using said approval tools accessed by the correspondent application.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein step d) comprises a sub-step of verifying an electronic signature provided on the electronic document made available in step c).

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein step d) comprises applying a correspondent electronic signature on the electronic document.

4. The method according to claim 1, comprising an additional step of:

e) securely printing the electronic document as approved in step d) from the correspondent terminal.

5. The method according to claim 1, comprising an additional step, before step c) of providing a proponent application on a proponent terminal connected to the network, said proponent application allowing the proponent to remotely and

securely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the proponent terminal.

5 6. The method according to claim 5, wherein step c) comprises electronically transmitting the electronic document from the proponent terminal to the correspondent terminal.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein, in step c), a messaging application is used for electronically transmitting said electronic document.

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8. The method according to claim 5, comprising an additional step of:
e) transmitting the electronic document as approved in step d) from the correspondent terminal to the proponent terminal.

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9. The method according to claim 8, comprising an additional step of:
f) securely printing the electronic document as approved in step d) from the proponent terminal.

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10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the server application of step a) further comprises enrolment tools for enrolling the correspondent, and step b) comprises enrolling said correspondent using said enrolment tools.

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11. The method according to claim 10, wherein step b) comprises the sub-steps of:
(i) transmitting a user ID and password to the correspondent terminal;
(ii) accessing the proponent server from the correspondent terminal using said user ID and password;
(iii) downloading the correspondent application from the proponent server to the correspondent terminal;
(iv) installing said correspondent application on said correspondent terminal.

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12. The method according to claim 11, wherein step b) comprises an additional sub-step of:

(v) generating a correspondent electronic signature representative of said correspondent.

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13. The method according to claim 12, wherein step b) comprises an additional sub-step of:

(vi) generating a correspondent identifier on the proponent server, the correspondent electronic signature being stored therein.

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14. A method for a proponent to enable the secure approval of an electronic document by a correspondent over a network, said method comprising the steps of:

a) providing a server application on a proponent server connected to the network, said server application comprising enrolment tools for enrolling the correspondent and approval tools for the secure approval of the electronic document;

b) assigning enrolment information to the correspondent;

c) transmitting the electronic document and enrolment information to a correspondent terminal connected to the network;

d) using said enrolment information to access said enrolment tools on the proponent server from the correspondent terminal;

e) enrolling the correspondent using the enrolment tools, said enrolling comprising the sub-step of:

(i) providing a correspondent application on the correspondent terminal, said correspondent application allowing the correspondent to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from said correspondent terminal; and

f) approving the electronic document on the correspondent terminal using said approval tools accessed by the correspondent application.

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15. The method according to claim 14, wherein step f) comprises a sub-step of verifying an electronic signature provided on the electronic document transmitted in step c).

5 16. The method according to claim 14, wherein step e) comprises an additional sub-step of:

(ii) generating a correspondent electronic signature representative of said correspondent.

10 17. The method according to claim 16, wherein step e) comprises an additional sub-step of:

(iii) generating a correspondent identifier on the proponent server, the correspondent electronic signature being stored therein.

15 18. The method according to claim 16, wherein step f) comprises applying said correspondent electronic signature on the electronic document.

19. The method according to claim 14, comprising an additional step of:

20 g) securely printing the electronic document as approved in step e) from the correspondent terminal.

20. The method according to claim 14, comprising an additional step, before step c) of providing a proponent application on a proponent terminal connected to the network, said proponent application allowing the proponent to remotely and
25 securely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the proponent terminal.

21. The method according to claim 20, wherein, in step c), said electronic document and enrolment information are transmitted from the proponent terminal
30 to the correspondent terminal using a messaging application.

22. The method according to claim 20, comprising an additional step of:

g) transmitting the electronic document as approved in step f) from the correspondent terminal to the proponent terminal.

5 23. The method according to claim 22, comprising an additional step of:

h) securely printing the electronic document as approved in step f) from the proponent terminal.

24. The method according to claim 14, comprising an additional step of:

10 g) transmitting the electronic document as approved in step e) from the correspondent terminal to the proponent server.

25. A method for a proponent to enable the secure approval of at least one electronic document by a plurality of correspondents over a network, each correspondent having a correspondent terminal connected to said network, said method comprising the steps of:

15 a) providing a server application on a proponent server connected to the network, said server application comprising enrolment tools for enrolling the plurality of correspondents and approval tools for the secure approval of the at least one electronic document;

b) assigning enrolment information to each correspondent of said plurality of correspondents;

c) transmitting said enrolment information to the correspondent terminal of a corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents; and

20 d) on each correspondent terminal, performing the steps of:

(i) using said enrolment information to access said enrolment tools on the proponent server from the correspondent terminal; and

(ii) enrolling the correspondent using the enrolment tools, said enrolling comprising providing a correspondent application on the correspondent terminal, said

25 correspondent application allowing the corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server

through the network from said correspondent terminal, said correspondent thereby being able to approve said at least one electronic document on said correspondent terminal using said approval tools accessed by the correspondent application.

5 26. The method according to claim 25, wherein the enrolling of sub-step d)(ii) further comprises generating a correspondent electronic signature representative of said corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents.

10 27. The method according to claim 26, wherein the enrolling of sub-step d)(ii) further comprises generating a correspondent identifier on the proponent server for said corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents, the correspondent electronic signature being stored therein.

15 28. A system for a proponent to enable the secure approval of an electronic document by a correspondent over a network, the network connecting a proponent server and a correspondent terminal, said electronic document being available on said correspondent terminal, the system comprising:

20 a server application provided on the proponent server, said server application comprising approval tools for the secure approval of the electronic document; and
a correspondent application provided on the correspondent terminal, said correspondent application allowing the correspondent to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the correspondent terminal and use said approval tools on said correspondent terminal for approving the electronic document.

25 29. The system according to claim 28, wherein said approval tools comprise verifying means for verifying an electronic signature provided on the electronic document.

30. The system according to claim 28, wherein said approval tools comprise signing means for providing a correspondent electronic signature on the electronic document.

5 31. The system according to claim 30, further comprising signature generating means for generating said correspondent electronic signature.

10 32. The system according to claim 30, wherein said signing means comprise a correspondent identifier provided on said proponent server, said correspondent identifier including the correspondent electronic signature.

15 33. The system according to claim 28, wherein said correspondent application comprises secure printing means for securely printing the electronic document as approved.

20 34. The system according to claim 28, further comprising a correspondent application provided on a proponent terminal connected to said network, said proponent application allowing the proponent to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the proponent terminal.

25 35. The system according to claim 34, further comprising transmitting means for transmitting the electronic document as approved through the correspondent application from said correspondent terminal to said proponent terminal.

30 36. The system according to claim 35, wherein said transmitting means include a messaging application.

37. The system according to claim 35, wherein said proponent application comprises secure printing means for securely printing the electronic document as approved.

38. The system according to claim 28, wherein said server application further comprises enrolment tools for enrolling said correspondent.

39. A system for a proponent to enable the secure approval of an electronic document by a correspondent over a network, said system comprising:

a server application provided on a proponent server connected to the network, said server application comprising approval tools for the secure approval of the electronic document;

transmitting means for transmitting the electronic document from the proponent server to a correspondent terminal connected to the network; and

a correspondent application provided on the correspondent terminal, said correspondent application allowing the correspondent to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from said correspondent terminal and approving the electronic document on the correspondent terminal using said approval tools accessed by the correspondent application.

40. The system according to claim 39, wherein said server application further comprises enrolment tools for enrolling said correspondent.

41. The system according to claim 40, wherein said enrolment tools comprise:

enrolment information transmittable by the transmitting means from the proponent server to the correspondent terminal, said enrolment information allowing the correspondent to access said server application from the correspondent terminal; and

means for providing said correspondent application on the correspondent terminal upon accessing the server application therefrom.

42. The system according to claim 41, wherein said enrolment information comprises a user ID and a password.

43. The system according to claim 39, wherein said approval tools comprise verifying means for verifying an electronic signature provided on the electronic document.

5 44. The system according to claim 39, wherein said approval tools comprise signing means for providing a correspondent electronic signature on the electronic document.

10 45. The system according to claim 44, further comprising signature generating means for generating said correspondent electronic signature.

46. The system according to claim 45, wherein said signing means comprise a correspondent identifier provided on said proponent server, said correspondent identifier including the correspondent electronic signature.

15 47. The system according to claim 39, wherein said correspondent application comprises secure printing means for securely printing the electronic document as approved.

20 48. The system according to claim 39, wherein said transmitting means include a messaging application.

25 49. The system according to claim 39, further comprising a proponent application provided on a proponent terminal connected to said network, said proponent application allowing the proponent to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from the proponent terminal.

30 50. The system according to claim 49, wherein said transmitting means cooperate with the proponent application for transmitting the electronic document as approved from the correspondent terminal to the proponent terminal.

51. The system according to claim 50, wherein said proponent application comprises secure printing means for securely printing the electronic document as approved.

5 52. A system for a proponent to enable the secure approval of at least one electronic document by a plurality of correspondents over a network, each correspondent having a correspondent terminal connected to said network, said system comprising:

10 a server application provided on a proponent server connected to the network, said server application comprising approval tools for the secure approval of the at least one electronic document, and enrolment tools for enrolling the plurality of correspondents, said enrolment tools comprising enrolment information assigned to each of said plurality of correspondents, said enrolment information allowing a corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents to access said enrolment tools on the proponent server from his correspondent terminal;

15 transmitting means for transmitting each of said enrolment information to the correspondent terminal of the corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents; and

20 a correspondent application providable on the correspondent terminal of each one of said plurality of correspondents using said enrolment tools accessed through the enrolment information, said correspondent application allowing the corresponding one of the plurality of correspondents to remotely access the approval tools on the proponent server through the network from said correspondent terminal, said correspondent thereby being able to approve said at least one electronic document on said correspondent terminal using said approval tools.

53. The system according to claim 52, wherein said enrolment information comprises a user ID and a password.

54. The system according to claim 52, wherein said approval tools comprise verifying means for verifying an electronic signature provided on the at least one electronic document.

5 55. The system according to claim 52, wherein said approval tools comprise signing means for providing a correspondent electronic signature on the at least one electronic document.

10 56. The system according to claim 55, wherein said signing means comprise a correspondent identifier provided on said proponent server for each one of the plurality of correspondents, said correspondent identifier including the correspondent electronic signature of said one of the plurality of correspondents.

15 57. The system according to claim 55, further comprising signature generating means for generating the correspondent electronic signature of each of the plurality of correspondents.

20 58. The system according to claim 52, wherein said correspondent application comprises secure printing means for securely printing the at least one electronic document as approved.

59. The system according to claim 52, wherein said transmitting means include a messaging application.

25 60. The system according to claim 52, wherein said transmitting means is further for transmitting the at least one electronic document from the proponent server to the correspondent terminal of each one of the plurality of correspondents.